#79

Wordeater 79 Staff

Donna Aiello, Christian Bernal, Jeff Hicks, Jennifer Jay, Dina Procenti, Mark Schillinger

In order to get a selection published in this issue, three of the above had to vote for acceptance.
For the award winners, only John Stobart is resposible.

AWARDS

Poetry
$5 to Christian Bernal
$5 to Tricia Concaildi
$5 to Jennifer Jay
$5 to Lyubov Mir
$5 to Shelly Partilla
$5 to R. Harrison Smith
$5 to David Tieman
$5 to Jonathan Wolff

Prose
$10 to Linda Steger

Covers
$20 to Jamie Dean

Manuscripts or cover designs for

Wordeater 80

must be submitted to John Stobart
in room c-1069 by:

May 4, 1992

Manuscripts should be typed
and will not be returned.

Next Deadlines:

May 4, 1992
September 20, 1992

All copyrights are retained by the authors, and materials will not be reprinted
without their permission.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	Christian Bernal	Sitting and Writing
1	Marie Cecily	Why
1	Laura Offrink	Put My Hard Flat Body
1	Mark Darwyn	Stray Cat
1	Tricia Cocialdi	Help Me
2	R. Harrison Smith	Lot "J"
2	Jennifer Jay	Graduation Tassels
2	Jennifer Jay	Used to Think About
3	Ann Collet	A Poet Trapped in a Science Teacher's Body
3	Christian Bernal	An Innocent Creature
3	Marie Cecily	Once Sleeping, Calm and Peaceful
3	R. Harrison Smith	Mr. Unethical
4	Kevin Olchawa	The Elevator
5	David Tieman	Seasonal Fanclub
5	Marie Cecily	The Caged Heart
5	David Tieman	The Painter/Gardener
5	Steev Custer	If I Could Choose to Have
6	Linda Steger	Come Play
6	LaDonna Hite	I Looked Around
6	Donica Rampa	All the Silicone Snow Has
6	Mark Darwyn	A Normal Kind of Trip
7	Tricia Concaildi	"Put Down the Gun!"
7	Lyubov Mir	I Miss You
7	Christian Bernal	This Last Caress
7	Justin Gale	Eating Americana
7	Shelly Partilla	Chipping Away
8	Jennifer Jay	The Intricacy of My Lace Curtains
8	Jeff Hicks	"976"
8	R. Harrison Smith	Weedlings
8	Steev Custer	I Brought You a Broken Arrow
8	LaDonna Hite	Yesterday
9	Lyubov Mir	In the Courtyard
9	Brent Senholtz	Ode to a Late Friend
9	David Tieman	A Reoccuring Dream
9	Jennifer Jay	Vinegar Fumes Roll Through my Nose
9	Shelly Partilla	Sipping Sweet Tea
10	Donica Rampa	I Rushed Around a Corner
10	Mark Darwyn	Survival of the Fittest
10	Laura Offrink	Piggy Bank
10	Linda Steger	I Keep Empties
11	Jennifer Jay	What Depends So Much on a Red Wheelbarrow?
11	Lyubov Mir	For You, My Friend
11	Marie Cecily	Child's Innocence
11	Janine Passehl	Solitude
12	Linda Steger	Lisa
12	Lyubov Mir	Only the Sky
12	Justin Gale	Unending Detention
12	Steev Custe	I Have My Vices
13	Jennifer Jay	Ted-Ted
13	Laura Offrink	Snowflake
13	Jennifer Jay	Little Buds are Popping Out
13	Christian Bernal	Contortion
14	Marie Cecily	My Friend Left Me
14	Shelly Partilla	A Date with Destiny
14	Lyubov Mir	The Voices Fade
14	Frank Sanchez	A Sky of Scenes
14	Tricia Concaildi	The Audition
15	R. Harrison Smith	When Elephants Dance
15	Kevin Olchawa	Circles
15	David Tieman	Imprisonment
15	Christian Bernal	Listening to the Quiet
16	Shelly Partilla	Third Grade Lovers
16	David Tieman	Graveyard Bunny
16	Christian Bernal	Despite All the Pain and Suffering
17	Lyubov Mir	It's Not Him
17	Jennifer Jay	Passion Swirled and Writhed
17	Marie Cecily	The Leaves
17	Jonathan Wolff	It Has Been Several Years
19	Lyubov Mir	Tell Me, Is It Love?
19	David Tieman	Modern Farmer
19	Christain Bernal	Tommorow
19	Steev Custer	In a Lonely Library
19	Shelly Partilla	You Thought I Thought
20	Jennifer Jay	Lace Curtains Look Lovely
20	Marie Cecily	To the One I Hold Most Dear
20	Jonathan Wolff	Shadows
20	David Tieman	A Beautiful Liquid
21	Linda Steger	Bethlehem
23	Christian Bernal	Vodka Bowl
23	Mark Darwyn	Sin for Life
23	Donica Rampa	Rolling Stone
23	Jonathan Wolff	Shriveled
23	Donica Rampa	No Personal Checks
24	Rick Kroeza	Clear Waters
24	Jeff Hicks	The Evil Inside of You
24	Donica Rampa	Take a Look at Me
24	Mark Darwyn	On Wisconsin
24	Steev Custer	A.P.I.B.L.
25	Lyubov Mir	She Writes with Her Pen
25	Justin Gale	Jan 20th
25	Laura Offrink	Daybreak
25	Donica Rampa	Livin' on the Edge
26	Jennifer Jay	Once
26	Lyubov Mir	The Starless Sky
26	Marie Cecily	When All Your Caring has Left Your Life
26	Mark Darwyn	Late Night Jazz Listener
27	Christian Bernal	Over the Chills
27	Teresa Garcia	My Own Perfect World
27	Steev Custer	I Drove Through Your Hurt
27	Donica Rampa	Beautiful Child
28	Linda Steger	Nearly Spring
28	Jonathan Wolff	Come!

SITTING AND WRITING

Christian Bernal

Sitting and writing by candle--light
Dancind shadows flickering in darkness
Silent silhouettes in a light barren dwelling
Still movements in the air.
Hot--
Wax running down . . . the cool candle

Electric sparks behind my eyelids (blue)
nestle me in slumber

May I die before I wake. . .

WHY

Marie Cecily

Why do we have to go to war?
Why can't they just stop askin' for more?
Why do the leaders have to lie?
Why do the little ones have to die?
Why don't the guilty have to pay?
Why can't they just do like the children say?
Why can one man hold so much hate,
And still hold power over our fate?

PUT MY HARD FLAT BODY

Laura Offrink

Put my hard flat body
Inside your warm wet mouth
Let the texture
Pick up some of your wetness
Chew me up
And carelessly toss me around
Blow into me
And watch me expand
Then pop me with your finger
Throw me around again
And again with your tongue
I like it
I am your chewing gum

STRAY CAT

Mark Darwyn

Oh yeah you . . . .
Slow and slim
cat on the prowl.

All that is missing in your
cat walk is a jungle to
surround your feline grace.

Green eyes glow outward
in the sun and shade alike,
as you strut toward me
with a slight smurk
that betrays a stealthy
feline confidence.

In a fit of anger
would you rake my back?
In an animal act of sexing
I can imagine you
stretched on all fours
squealing in feline passion.

Are you prowling toward me
with this in mind or are you
straying past me to find
another mate?

HELP ME

Tricia Concaildi

Help me.

I'm falling.

my right hand,
my strongest
clenches the rope so tightly
that my knuckles are white.
If I can just get my other . . .

and I fall,
but I catch with my left.
not as strong, but holding.
I can reach the rope
with the right now.
I have both hands on the rope.
I am beginning to climb.

and I fall.
lower than before, only one hand keeps me.

(con't)

HELP ME, continued

and I fall.
and the fight is continual.

lower and lower
and there is no end
and I am weak
and I am tired

and I am lonely

and I fall.

LOT "J"

R. Harrison Smith

Students strolling
As they talk.
They know I'm following
As they walk.

Sitting behind
My steering wheel,
A place to park
I hope they yield.

Just when I'm sure
I'll get what I must,
They scamper past
And jump on a bus.

Frustrated and angry
While peering thru glass,
In a few more minutes
I'll be late for class.

Cruising too long
Or waiting for space,
Prompts campus cops
To get in my face.

Threatened with tickets
And directed away,
They end my quest
To park in lot "J".

GRADUATION TASSELS

Jennifer Jay

Graduation tassels
Hung from the door
Much like a little person
With a tiny head
And long, long body
Stretched out perhaps
From hanging there too long
By its neck

USED TO THINK ABOUT

Jennifer Jay

Used to think about
The beach
Just at that time of day
Between afternoon and dusk.
The sky would be hot gold
So would the sea
With an undeterminable horizon.
There I'd be on pale sand
Foam bubbling between
Grains and smooth red pebbles
Just a blur in your eyes
A backdrop for your . . . .
Focus
on me.

That's why I bought the dress.

It's a summer one
Below my knees
With pointy blue flowers.

Wind blows
Shoulders glow
Dress flows
Back shows

Hair gleams
Arms stream
Eyes beam
Close your own.
A vision not seen
Never that scene.

I still have the trace of pearly beads I never sewed.

A POET TRAPPED IN A SCIENCE TEACHER'S BODY

Ann Collet

On notes home:
Mrs. Jones, I'm sad to say
Tom misbehaved in class today.
Can I see you, sooner or later,
to discuss the fate of this instigator?

Mr. Smith:
Your son Jim is quite bright.
But can he think instead of fight?
We must meet, you, me and Jim
to discover what's gotten into him.

Mrs. Johnson:
Susan has been doing well
but lately, well, it's hard to tell
if she's spending time on class assignments,
or spending time with a football lineman.
Her work hasn't been up to her past standards
I hope I haven't been too candid.
We must discuss this lowered performance
before the effects become enormous.

On exam day:
Put your name on the
top of the test;
Be quiet, try hard and
do your best!

During class:

Fetal pigs are as easy to disect as butter
just be careful;
don't slit his gut--er--
small intestine.

Look for the heart, the liver,
the lungs,
find the esophagus, trachea,
and tongue.

His skeleton is soft,
but his brain is guite fragile.
Be careful, don't slip
when you go to dismantle
the occipital lobe near the
atlas and axis
You get but one shot,
there are no second chances.

AN INNOCENT CREATURE

Christian Bernal

Running about
scurrying
on the tree
on the ground

playing on the soft white skin of winter

quickly across the icy lake

too far
to view

ONCE SLEEPING, CALM AND PEACEFUL

Marie Cecily

Once sleeping, calm and peaceful:
You woke me.
Now, restless, I toss and flail
Upon the bed of uncertainty.
Always alert, always questioning,
Never resting from the unrelenting truth.
Burning for the answers unheard,
Unyielding as time in my search.
You broke the links that were
Chaining me to the wall of faith.
With all stability gone
My supports crumble.
I lay sprawled and broken
Across the cold, hard ground.
Turning now, in my agony, I look
Only to find you there, laughing.

MR. UNETHICAL

R. Harrison Smith

There was once an effective manager
Who was a leader with much appeal.
"Be honest to the one who pays you",
He said, "and never ever steal."

Following his words, and this golden rule,
His employees had fallen ill.
Their mentor, it seems, had failed them all,
He got caught with his hand in the till.

THE ELEVATOR

Kevin Olchawa

Hey there, howz ya'll doin'? My name's Teddy, Teddy Whetfield. I'd like to welcome ya'll to our little town of Haddenville. What'll be your pleasure?

Naw we don't git that imported stuff . . . Bud, Old Mil, Old Style, Busch, and Miller Lite, a favorite with the ladies, on tap.

Yessir. Two Buds it'll be.

What brings ya'll to town?

Business?

Well, I'll be . . . Lathum's Farm? Gosh, that must be at least twenty acres . . . What're ya fixin to do wh'it?

A shoppin' mall! I'll be pickled pigs feet! We gonna go urban!

Hold on . . . ya mean a big shoppin' mall? Ya best not put any elevators in it!

Hey, don't go gettin' all sore over me now. S'just these people are tight, these people don't like alevators.

. . . Hmmm . . .

Caught yer eye? Huh. Both ya, take a good look at it. It's jus not any funeral pres'sion. Hey, hey, hey now, slow down, jus relax. Geez you city folk sure are jittery.

Well, I'm gonna tell ya this story I jus best start at the beginnin'.

Humm... two more Buds, no problem, here ya go. Now,
like I jus said, these folks don't like elevators. Haddenville's a small town. No elevators, no need for elevators.

But to git to my story--well to be honest witcha it's John Lathum's story. A guy who works with 'em, keeps Mister Lathum's barn, told me earlier when he stopped fer a beer. Goss'p travels fast in a small town.

Anyway, Paul Lathum, John's only son, was never afraid of elevators, ya see, he jus never got in one. It all started when 'is grandaddy told'm that no Lathum can ever step foot ina elevator. It was very bad luck to do so. The story is that his uncle Billy, visitin' Des Moines, got 'is arm broken by an elevator door. Then Paul's great aunt, Bessy, hypervent'lated an suffered a mild heart attack in an elevator up in C.R., Cedar Rapids case ya don't know. No Lathum had set foot into an elevator since. That was in '71, twenty-one years ago.

Paul, like all the Lathum men was very athletic. His grandaddy, his two uncles, his ole man, an' even mos his cousins played football,basketball, or baseball. Most 'em played at least two sports, But Paul played four 'cludin his wrestlin'. Only other dif'frence, though, was Paul not only had wit, charm, and athletic 'bilty, he had smarts. He graduated from Central in '87 and became the first Lathum to go to college.

U of I, University of Iowa, drafted him to play football. His freshman year he started quarterback. Helluva passer too. Standing nearly six an' a half feet tall he could throw over the line or even give 'em a jolt himself if he hadda scramble.

Anyway, things went well for him the first two years. In 'is freshman year he was the leading passer in the Big Ten. Michigan beat 'em to the Roses though, tough break. Paul's sophmore year was good as grit too. They went to the Rose Bowl, but lost to Washington 31-28. Paul passed for nearly 300 yards that day! Too bad his defense played like a buncha chickens with're heads cut off.

The only trouble Paul ever got was from the ribbin' he got from his teammates. Of course, the boy wouldn't ride elevators! Believe that? A grown boy, a man, an' he didn't ride elevators. They say they'd call 'im Stairwell Lathum or Paul "no thanks--I'll take the stairs" Lathum. They'd ask 'im if he got so fast from runnin' up 'n down stairs all 'is life. Yeah, they're not witty guys. Mind ya these all meat 'n potatoes fellas from Iowa playin' fooyball. They got their heads in the game, but that's 'bout the only place.

Sure, two more right up.

So, as it goes. Paul's junior year comes. The pros are b'ginnin' to lookit Paul. He's feeling confident. Until the Illinois game in late October. The game never meant much cuz the Illini were out of it, but the Hawkeye's were undefeated an' wanted to stay thaway.

Paul rolled hard to his right, didn't see that his pass coverage fell apart, and bam. To this day I think he saw his life flash before 'is eyes. Number 99, I forget 'is name at the time, hit 'im like a truck. Jus as someun came right at 'em in front. 99 hit Paul square in the left thigh pad an the other guy hit 'im straight in 'is chest. Snap. Madderafact, so was a college career. Paul's knee was shattered like a dry chicken bone.

But Paul had 'is smarts.

He finished school with a B.A. in somethin', an' found 'imself a cute lil' honeymuffin too. She sure did have the smarts too! Believe it was Chicago she was from, some fancy suburb, rich girl, but nice enough. Only met 'er once--she was not zactly the tavern type!!

Anywho, they both finished college and Paul's lil' lady got 'erself a nice job in Chicago, some high-rise. She didn't havta start 'till January, this month, so she stayed here in Haddenville with Paul these last six months. Time went by and all went well. Fact, last June they got themselves engaged! What a couple they were.

The weddin' date was set for December 25th, Christmas day. Lathum's have a habit of gittin' hitched on Christmas day. If I'm not mistaken it was Paul's birthday too. Anyway, thas jus slop in a hog's trough. Real nice weddin', all those pretty red Christmas flowers an' such.

They went to Mexico for their honeymoon. I guess her parents owned some condos down in Los Bresis or somethin like that.

(con't)

All said and done they's was married now. After the honeymoon they hadn't decided where to move. Although, since Paul's lil' lady got 'erself a job in Chicago, they thought they'd move over there. Since that was the case, she went to her parents house two weeks ago to get ready for work.

Without 'er knowin' it Paul and his father, the most successful farmer in these parts, put a down payment on a lil' house in those suburbs. Paul drove up there on 'is wife's first day at work to surprise 'er.

This is the part I'm lil' unsure 'bout. Many stories goin' 'round, but I think this 'bout what happens.

Paul, ya see, called 'is wife from the lobby cuz he didn't know where she worked in the buildin'. His wife said 'er office was all the way up to the thirty-fifth floor an' to come on up.

Well to make a long story short, I picked this up from the gas station on Main, they carry the Chicago Tribune.

Yessir, read the headline . . .

"Women killed in freak elevator accident"
"Police say it fell 35 floors!!!"

Guess she wondered what was takin' 'im so long. .

Guess she thought he thought she'd go down an' meet 'im . . .

All this while he was 'bout twenty floors up . . on the stairs.

Humm . . ya sure . . two more Buds . . . fine. . . .

SEASONAL FANCLUB

David Tieman

I have a second grade relationship
With a camouflaged cat
That plays slide trombone
For the fireflies
Of midnight
That are calmly seduced
By his exotic,
Prarie--wandering melodies
While silently flickering
Their cigarette lighters

THE CAGED HEART

Marie Cecily

THERE IS ONE TO WHOM MY HEART BELONGS,
WHO'S HEART I CAN NOT HOLD.
ANOTHER KEEPS THE KEY I DESIRE,
KNOWING THE LOCK GROWS OLD.
BUT PATIENTLY I AWAIT THE DAY
ON WHICH THE LOCK BREAKS FREE.
TILL THEN MY HEART BELONGS TO THE ONE
WHOSE LOVE I LONG TO BE.

THE PAINTER/GARDENER

David Tieman

Medication
Spraypainting rebellious messages
On the surface of his inhibitions
That vandalize his mentality
With coats of orange and green

Alcoholic ivy
Climbing the walls of his intelligence
And stubbornly weaving its tentacles
Around his dying sanity
As I drive
His paint--thinning
And weed-killing
Cadillac

IF I COULD CHOOSE TO HAVE

Steev Custer

If I could choose to have
multiple-personalities, I would.

I could switch from a man to
a boy, run through the streets
and play.

But when I grew tired,

I could be Grandpa, lounging in
a hammock underneath the
apple tree.

And when I awoke,
I would be anyone, or maybe
everyone.

And I would never be alone.

COME PLAY

Linda Steger

Come play
your harmonica for me
And let me listen to the sound
of soul

The notes floating to the ceiling
bouncing, seeking freedom

Come play and read to me
Your words that travel
in straight lines off each page

Your words dance around me
and I clap silently with glee

Like a child
chosen, centered inside a crowd of friends

Come play
and sit or walk or
let's run
and take the wind by the hand

swinging it around and around
letting it go
as I let go when you
come play

I LOOKED AROUND

LaDonna Hite

I looked around to find something that would remind me
of you; all I found was the weight I lost worrying.

ALL THE SILICONE SNOW HAS

Donica Rampa

All the silicone snow has
Settled to the bottom of my
tiny glass enclosure
And I,
curl up in my
protective fetal position,
still waiting for someone
to come and shake me up.

A NORMAL KIND OF TRIP

Mark Darwyn

Moving toward me in
the cold, vast night,
a pair of white round lights
shine into my eyes
uninvited.

What speeds this person
toward me I know for certain,
for the miracles of technology
are nothing if not predictable.

Why is he out tonight?
(It could even be a she, not
a he.) Or maybe a group of
people, all in unison, are shining
their bright twin lights at me,
and not thinking twice about it.

In times past when a stranger passed
upon a road it was an event.
The two figures would discover each other's
shape upon the horizon, take time
to contemplate the other's
identity and unique humanity.
Finally contact would occur.
Just then my thoughts
are disrupted.
The car rushes past
a dark blur, the cold metal
box containing a mystery which
I will not have the chance
to discover again. It will remain
a faceless metal box forevermore.

"PUT DOWN THE GUN!"

Tricia Concaildi

"Put down the gun!"
Nothing.
"Damnit David, put it down!"
Nothing.
"Oh please, please! I'm so sorry I yelled at you! I'm just so scared. I'm so sorry! Please, please put it down David!"
She sobs now.
He moves closer to her. The .38 is now staring her in the face.
It moves slowly across her face; staring first into the left eye, and then into the right.
She trembles uncontrollably.
His hand begins to quiver.
His eyes are black holes.
What does he see?
One hand grips her throat.
She begins to wheeze and struggle for air.
A sudden strength comes from her insides.
With the last of her mustered strength she breaks his hold, and throws him backwards onto the floor.
Getthegungetthegungetthegun, is all she hears.
She lunges.
She's got it!
BOOM BOOM BOOMBOOMBOOMBOOM!

She giggles uncontrollably,
shaking in her laughter.
"Gotcha!"
She puts the gun down
and walks out smiling,
wiping his blood from her face.

I MISS YOU

Lyubov Mir

I thought I saw you today.
I almost said hi;
Then I realized it couldn't be you.
I wish you were here.
Letters are one thing
And phone calls are another
But the truth is, I miss you.
I know I'll see you again
Sometime
But I thought I saw you today
And I miss you more.

THIS LAST CARESS

Christian Bernal

This last caress
gentle
dwelling in the mind
A passive emotion
before rest

silence in abundance
senses tingling
awakening for the dream

a quick
spinal shiver
before birth

EATING AMERICANA

Justin Gale

By now
i care
Not
reverence dismayed
Nintendo revered
Doritos consumed
fat--lazy--son--of
an american
cares
Not
by now

CHIPPING AWAY

Shelly Partilla

Chipping away at my writer's
Block of ice,
I searched for signifigance
Somewhere underneath.
There's no excuse for my blank mind--
But thriugh a long, effortless
process of procrastination,
I've managed to waste time
Chipping when it should be
melting.
How many hours must I spend
Warming up
To get an "A" on my thoughts?

THE INTRICACY OF MY LACE CURTAINS

Jennifer Jay

The intricacy of my lace curtains
Makes me think of a cell
Vacuoles Ribosomes Centrioles
In a bag of Cytoplasm
Swaying by my window
With a wagging Flagella thread
Blown by the floor vent's breath.

"976"

Jeff Hicks

She doesn't walk the streetcorners
Looking for a john
She receives a phone call
From a doctor, lawyer or don

She never has to meet them
Or dress uo for the oart
She only has to talk dirty
And when to stop and start

They quickly dial her number
And ask if she is there
They need some satisfaction
And their desires to bear

She breaks out the Naugahyde straps
The leather whips and chains
"Have you been a naughty boy?" she asks
"Shall I inflict some pain?"

All her words are passion
All her sounds are pain
She's playing slave and master
For pure financial gain

Three dollars the first minute
A buck-fifty after that
The callers phonebill's skyrocket
It's all money in her hat

She ends a conversation
And gives her whip a crack
They all thank her profusely
She knows that they'll call back

writers note: I have never called, I REPEAT, I have never called one of these "services" & I only got this idea from seeing one of their really bad ads on Channel 9 around midnight!

WEEDLINGS

R. Harrison Smith

Spiked green monsters
Upon my lawn
Must feverishly breed
From dusk until dawn.

When sunlight arrives,
In battle I stand,
To reduce this enemy
By force of hand.

As night approaches,
My strength must mass
For the next day's skirmish
With newborn crabgrass.

I BROUGHT YOU A BROKEN ARROW

Steev Custer

I brought you a broken arrow,
in hopes it would prove I could
not be stopped.

I brought you a clock with a crack
in it's face,
to show that our time would not
cease

And I brought you my broken self,
to show that I'd do good for you.

You told me to forget my gifts,
which were useless and pathetic.
So I give you my depression,
The only unbroken thing I own.

YESTERDAY

LaDonna Hite

YESTERDAY I WAS IN MY RIGHT MIND,
TODAY I HAD MY RIGHT MIND,
TOMORROW I HOPEFULLY WILL KEEP MY RIGHT MIND,
IN THE PAST I HAD A CHILD'S MIND,
IN THE PRESENT I HAVE AN ADULT MIND,
IN THE FUTURE I HOPE TO HAVE NO MIND AT ALL.

IN THE COURTYARD

Lyubov Mir

I don't want to go outside today.
But the sky is so blue
and the air is so clear
See the grass waving and the leaves
whispering, "Come out, come out!"

I don't want to go into the cold.
But the sun will warm you
and the breeze will comfort you
The trees will talk with you
and the clouds will sing with you

"Come out," they say
And so I come.

ODE TO A LATE FRIEND

Brent Senholtz

Ere the hair has settled
All about her breast
Like a fawn in a nettle
She lies in rest
Her body posed in the metal
A brazen gallant chest
Her face a rose's petal
A lonesome grave her rest
Her life while hard to cope
Made of dreams in skies above
She always searches fof hope
Always searching for love

A REOCCURING DREAM

David Tieman

In the bloated hallways
Of my kindergarten nightmares
I pant
Enduring weeks
Of nicotine--free nerves
On the junior high floor
Running through the tornado people
Who bow to the flapping lockers,
Slamming the diamond--laced classroom doors
Upon the deafening metallic clatter,
And hiding breathlessly
Behind the stacks of miniature boxes
Away fromthe insane alcoholic secretary
Finding in the end
That the only relief
From hyperventilation
Is electrocution in the blackened dungeon
Where the janitors dwell

VINEGAR FUMES ROLL THROUGH MY NOSE

Jennifer Jay

Vinegar fumes roll through my nose
And up to my eyes
Only to make them turn in my head.

As I loll in the dust
I pour steamy water
And add a drop of dye.

The slightest peach shade
Drop . . .
Now darker orange clouds
Fall to the bottom
Drop . . .
Drop . . . Done.
Turn to a red
Plunk in the sun
Red to scarlet
Scarlet to plum
With spoon in hand
Scoop up the moon
Roll it into bestial blue
Dust in my nails
Chill in my chest
Gather up my colored dye
Walking backwards through the field
I see a star shake in the Easter Egg sky.

SIPPING SWEET TEA

Shelly Partilla

Sipping sweet tea
From sumptous bone china,
You told me you loved me
And I couldn't resist
Another sugar cube.
Tossing chocolates
Into my gaping mouth,
I tried to pretend I didn't hear you
And I hoped maybe you'd forget
(But I'd never been in love before
And I didn't know you don't forget).
I tried to talk about the weather
And my ailing grandmother
But you kept looking at me
Between gulps
And finally, I let loose
And smiled.

I RUSHED AROUND A CORNER

Donica Rampa

I rushed around a corner
and collided with myself
How've you been? I asked
Not too bad, was the reply
Then I left, before
too many questions
were asked
That I didn't want to answer

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Mark Darwyn

Swat the fly,
bat the bug,
fry the ant with
a magnifying glass.

Raid the bee,
throw a caterpillar
and a lit pack of firecrackers
into a bucket
and see what happens.

Shoot the rabbit,
run over the squirrel,
but watch out for that skunk.

Hunt the deer,
drink some beer,
and shoot the bull
like all good studs do.
Kill the beast and
take the tusk.

Don't forget to
bash in the brains of those little baby seals.
But beat, do not slash.
Cut up pelts don't bring good money.

Man, I'm broke. I need
some money. Wait. That
skinny guy over there. No one
around, and I' ve got my knife . . .

PIGGY BANK

Laura Offrink

CLING CLANG
Sounds my change
On the bottom
Of my piggy bank
CRASH BANG
Sounds it again
As the hammer
Shatters it
I couldn't
Spend it wisely
Or invest it
In something
Momentary
Happiness
Is all a child
Ever needs
So children
Break Piggy
And take your pennies
To the store
Since happiness
Cannot be bought
What are we
Saving pennies
For?

I KEEP EMPTIES

Linda Steger

An empty perfume bottle, a gift, gone
lays sideways like a woman reclines on a chaise.
The fragrance recalls for me the embraces,
the lingering kisses, the breath that breathed
life into me.

I keep empties.
For sad days.
For smiles.
For insight . . .

that life is not made of empty spaces
rather it is made of
spaces that have been made empty.

WHAT DEPENDS SO MUCH OH A RED WHEEL-BARROW?

Jennifer Jay

What depends so much on a Red Wheelbarrow?
Can't really say, Will.
But so much does depend
On Red Puddle Jumpers.

They're cold savers
Thermolite warm
Ice grippers
Snow slippers
Winter worn
DuPont born.

They're fire engine red
Attention getters
Made in mold
34 bucks--sold!
Snowball splitters
Feetsy sitters.

So much depends upon Red Puddle Jumpers.

FOR YOU, MY FRIEND

Lyubov Mir

I know your hurt, I know your pain,
I see it on your face.
I know it's hard to think those thoughts
Could ever be replaced.
Just know I care, that I'm concerned
I'm here for you, my friend.
So if you want a hand or not
I'll see you through the end.

It tears me up as well, you know,
To see you feel this way.
I wish I knew what I could do
To chase your hurt away.
So tell me what to do or say
To make your shadows flee.
I'll help you to bring back the light
That's brought such joy to me.

CHILD'S INNOCENCE

Marie Cecily

Born into this world anew,
Untouched by wrongful prejudice,
A child's heart stays true.
As yet unmarked by sin,
They almost seem to glow
From the innocence that burns within.
Unaware of violence that rends the heart in two,
The child holds the innocence
Until their heart bleeds too.
All those thoughts lead us to a task
That is often filled with woe,
For some say that we should ask,
"Where did all the innocence go?"

SOLITUDE

Janine Passehl

i drive through those streets
and i'm lonely as ever
people all around
these ties i want to sever
its these people i grew up knowing
playing, laughing, loving, growing
people i can't tolerate now
i have to get away

i've got to find some solitude
away from everybody
i fear that if i stay much longer
they will drive me crazy
they know not what's important
live only for appearances
there must be something better
i have to disappear

take me to the city
where nobody knows your name
where in each person's circle
lives don't have to change
i'll just be who i want to be
no charades and no pretend
it's days like now i wish solitude
be my only friend

LISA

Linda Steger

Lisa fingered the mystic sheers open an inch. "Do you hate me?"

Michael looked up from the floor at the naked silhouette under Lisa's white summer dress. Her form is flawless. "Yes, I hate you."

"Then I hate you for hating me." Letting go of the sheer, she smoothed her dress over her tummy. "You promised you wouldn't hate me. That first day we made love, you promised to love me forever."

"And I will. Forever. And then for some time after that date. I don't know any other way of life, except to love you."

Michael leaned his frame against the cushion of the Lazy Boy, the weight on his shoulders feeling heavier by the minute.

"I never told you I wouldn't hate you though. I merely promised to love."

"We haven't much time." Lisa walked over to him. "I thought we could spend the last hour in silence."

"Like the silent movies you love to watch. You want to replay us next week, next month. . . ," he was going on in pity.

"For our next lifetime." Her eyes said she understood. "I'll retell it to you. But now let's make the movie, and not worry about when or why or how or -- details. I hate details when I'm in love." She touched his hand.

Wrapping his fingers around hers, he stood. Taking her up into his arms, he walked her into the bedroom -- their room -- they made out of the den in his apartment. It was unused, unneeded before she entered his life. He never asked why she didn't want to use his bed, in his room. But he understood now. After she was gone, she would really never leave. I f she shared his bed, her scent would be in his sheets, in his mattress, in his dreams -- smothering him. At least this way he had a chance.

Setting her on the bed, she promised someone would take the bed down and remove it tomorrow.

Silently, Michael touched her lips with his finger tips and then his lips, thinking -- not even one day to reminisce. She showed no mercy.

ONLY THE SKY

Lyubov Mir

I want to be outside
Even though it is cold
  and windy
  and raining
I need to know something shares my feelings
Even if it is only the sky.
So I walk outside
  and let the wind chill me
  and the rain fall on me
And I share my loneliness
With the gray sky.

UNENDING DETENTION

Justin Gale

HEY MOM
TRIP TO WAS FUN
NOT FUN FOR THEM THOUGH
HEY MOM
WHEN DO THEY GET TO

GO HOME

I HAVE MY VICES

Steev Custer

I have my vices.
I have my hopes, and none
of your icy demands can
kill them.

I have flowers for friends.
They've been one with the soil
for so long that their erect
posture is no longer a
necessity, but a pleasure.

I have a poisoned heart,
Much like the lost & lonely,
Starts to feel better,
and is sanctified.
And
Again
Has
Died.
but smile for me.
for solitude has an expensive
price, so does having friends.

TED-TED

Jennifer Jay

I see you lookin' at me
And me looking out your eye.
The spiderweb crack
Hangs like a halo
Above the eye me.
It' s the only eye,
Other was torn out.
I meant to keep it.

Ugh! I've kissed you a million times
And now your little red tongue (pilth)
Is tough and dry.
Your nose is peeling
And the scar on your chest is white.
With green fraying threads down your leg.
Two foot. Four stryofoam bag,
C'mere and kiss me again!

SNOWFLAKE

Laura Offrink

Falling softly
From the cold winter sky
I drift on wind currents
And float softly by
Snowflake I am
Six sides have I
Riding on air
A good life is mine
Gravity is my friend
A snowdrift is my goal
Locating it?
Too late to know
As I near it
The wind pushes me past
My dream is foiled
I am melting too fast

LITTLE BUDS ARE POPPING OUT

Jennifer Jay

Little buds are popping out
On the plum tree and
On the oak. Yet
The frosted over
Clumps of filth
Still lie unmelted in the street.
(con't)

LITTLE BUDS ARE POPPING OUT, continued

Spring's not a bad season.
But it leads on to summer.
I always felt in those hot months
That I should be happy--
It seems the common theme.
But I really don't like beaches
Or coconut tanning oil
Sunglasses big as goggles
Blinding sun
Mosquitoes
Sticky, smelly bodies
So hot you don't want to move
Dizziness
Fatigue
A thermo-blast inside a closed car
Mostly just that feeling
That summer wants me to be happy.
Or maybe its the beer commercials
That make me think I'm missing a good thing.

CONTORTION

Christian Bernal

Contortion

disgusting sensuality

Drooling

from the mouth of the beast

overwhelming sensations

a blurring kaleidoscope

of perverse excitement

whisping through you

Clenched teeth

imprisoning screams

from artistic self-mutilation

wide-eyed in the light

MY FRIEND LEFT ME

Marie Cecily

My friend left me
One beautiful sunny day.
A look, and I knew he was gone.
But I wasn't alone,
For he was still there,
Standing in the very same place.
He left me for what was right,
For what was meant to be.
And I'll never mourn the day
My friend disappeared,
Because he became my love.

A DATE WITH DESTINY

Shelly Partilla

We bought the lunch buffet at Rax
And stayed for dinner, talking
Of how shy we both were
When it came to relationships.
We tossed around
Magnificent stories of romantic
escapades(fantasies really)
And I recited the 42 dream dates
I had documented in pages of my journal
Some of them were quite out-landish--
Like kissing while standing on our heads--
And some were not
Like kissing at midnight in a snowfall
And you discovered my fetish
With kissing and snow.
You promised right then and there
That you would kiss me in the snow.
Wouldn't you know that this year,
We're expected to have a mild winter.

THE VOICES FADE

Lyubov Mir

It's amazing how when you walk by yourself
After you reach a certain point
You can't hear voices anymore.
Only the wind blowing by.
Nothing but a far-off echo
Of laughter and love.
Only the clouds in your eyes
And the wind blowing by.

A SKY OF SCENES

Frank Sanchez

As the tides burst into song
Their vaporous tunes,
The misty spray for which my spirit longs,
My naked body consumes.

This foreign sea, a liquid gem,
Replacing obscene routines
Ablaze with change, from which stems
A sea of life, a sky of scenes.

Aqua seethes, green it breathes,
The art of life alive.
My soul seems to dream itself a gull,
Harmonizing in stride with the ever moving tide for which
it
Strives to be.

THE AUDITION

Tricia Concaildi

The Audition.

Trembling and shaking
Memory failing
Dizzineess overwhelms.
Debating
Questioning
Hoping
Praying.

Bright lights staring down,
Blank faces
Sweat dripping
footsteps echoing.

Quiet.
Waiting to begin
Looking for a signal
Taking a deep breath

Blurting out the words
The tune escapes

Weeks, months of hard work
for a few terrified moments on the stage.

Awful! Terrible!
Tears everywhere.
Hopelessnes.
Not a word from the blank faces.
Not even a thank you.

Despair.

WHEN ELEPHANTS DANCE

R. Harrison Smith

I am like a mouse,
Small, swift, and frail.
To others of great size,
I'm bullied beyond avail.

To oppose these evil forces
By standing firm to fight,
I'd surely lose the battle
Being hurt by vicious might.

Appealing to my resources
To survive this present term,
The ones who came to help me
Had strengths of pachyderms.

They told me not to worry,
Leave nothing more to chance,
To bring these foes inside their circle
And watch the elephants dance.

Following their instruction,
Everything they said was true.
They danced upon my problems,
Reducing them to goo.

CIRCLES

Kevin Olchawa

. . . you use me
You say you love me
As a friend;
Then you fall in love with him
You say you love me
As a friend;
Then you ignore me
You say you love me
As a friend;
Then you argue with him
You say you love me
As a friend;
Then you cry to me
You say you love me
As a friend;
Then you wish he were more like me
You say you love me
As a friend;
Then you leave him
You say you love me
As a friend;
Then you say you wish you could find someone like me
You say you love me
As a friend;
Then. . .

IMPRISONMENT

David Tieman

Browse through my picture album.
Window-shop through my childhood.
Smile wide with your arms
And cling to Daffy Duck with me
Tightly,
Sincerely--
Imagining the fuzzy warmth I felt
Yesterday--

Now--
Join me in sliding into that damn yellow suit
That I wore so proudly,
But innocently
On picture day
And listen to my words--
Close it!
As I do
Knowing that the sweet girl
On the final page
Still claws at the cellophane cover.

LISTENING TO THE QUIET

Christian Bernal

icy silver morning
sadness rises early
yawns of awkwardness
cloud my head

innocent reflections
on my spectacle glass
uneventful in the still,
frozen morning

growling bleakness
echoing in the empty outside
far away
in the closing distance

listening to the quiet
burn

THIRD GRADE LOVERS

Shelly Partilla

You watched me
Catching snowflakes on my tongue
After the first big snowfall
And you tried to build the biggest
Snowman on the block
To impress me.
You didn't know I watched you too--
Or mayde you did--but I didn't care
Because I wanted you to know
I loved you.
We spent the afternoon together--
You building snow forts in your
yard
And me making angels in mine.
But never did we speak
And never did we glance
But from corners of our eyes.
And after we ravished the
virgin snow,
We went inside our respective
homes
Marveling at our first taste of
love.

GRAVEYARD BUNNY

David Tieman

Graveyard bunny
Pink and passionate
Roams the fields of chipped stone
Seducing the ivory faces
Of the underworld poets
Alone.

Her and nature
Sharing beds
With men of the curving gravel roads
A one night stand
In death's trance
And she falls in love with the unknown.

DESPITE ALL THE PAIN AND SUFFERING

Christian Bernal

The king was lonely
perfumed mists ran through his chamber.
he was dead
inside
and his eyes were solemn

Wild parrots of the kingdom
swam below.
they were laughing
in the peach grass
finding shade under the sweets tree.

A silent path
snaked through the woods
Come with me
she said.
How do I know you will not kill me
I questioned
This is your dream
she replied

So we ran over the hill
to where nothingness grew,
its really quite a pleasing aroma.
And the queen sat by the ocean
naked
on the rocks.
conversing with the waves
a festival of tiny crabs
were swarming at her feet.

Hello, you know me
I looked
she was blind
milky gems licked my nipples
I felt her leg
and ran to the hut

I had lost my clothes
and needed to sleep
but it was tea time
and the grey hounds would be coming soon
so the old man said

he danced out the door
and down the shore
(crazy old man)
and as I looked over my shoulder
I woke up.

IT'S NOT HIM

Lyubov Mir

It's not him that I'm still in love with
It's the thought of being in love.
It's not that I still want him
It's just that I can't give it up.

Despite that I still think about him
It's not him I see in my dreams
And it's true I can live without him
However it sounds or seems.

It's not him that I keep watching
I just need somebody to see.
It's not us I keep imagining
I just need somebody with me.

There's nothing to kill this feeling
Except for the passage of time.
There's nothing to stop this torture
Cause all of it's in my mind.

It's not that I still love him
Though I know what you're going to say
It's just the thought of not being in love
That's making me hurt this way.

PASSION SWIRLED AND WRITHED

Jennifer Jay

Pasiion swirled and writhed
Coiled around her body
And when she inhaled
She took in her passion.

As she exhaled
Their desires clashed
In the milky darkness
That came to stink of bodies.

Remember that smell, Boy?
It's been quite a few weeks
Since I've had the pleasure
Of experiencing sweat
breath skin sex
That musty odor lingering
Like cigarette smoke.
Fumes of passion.

Now all I smell in this room
Is lemon furniture polish--
Clean in a filmy way.

THE LEAVES

Marie Cecily

Quietly, one-by-one, they fall,
Whispering the change of season
Blanketing the dying earth.
Each alone, unique,
With its own story to tell.
Together heralding winter
In all it's violent glory.
Falling as tears from one
Who has lost the strength
To fight, keep up, survive.
The earth must dry them,
Save their remnants,
Their hopes, dreams, memories.
So they can come again,
Be reborn through the next line
And live on in those left behind.

IT HAS BEEN SEVERAL YEARS

Jonathan Wolff

It has been several years
        since I took up my wanderings.
I left with doubt burning
        like acid on ice in my brain.
Tortured tears!
Frustrated fury!
Where have I been?
        where will I go?
Where am I now?

God, how I have changed
        this world is so deranged
But will I leave my mark
        upon it?
Might I lay in my bath
        alone and peaceful
To die a thousand dreams?
You know nothing!

And so on the fifth day
        I came upon the house of doubt.
Naked children lay about,
        breathless and battered.
These are my former victims
        of stupidity.
In ignorance
        they lay tattered.
What lies within this great palace?
I tell you this:
        in it you are alone.

(con't)

IT HAS BEEN SEVERAL YEARS, continued

I tripped the wall
and scaled the sea
And found that I know
nothing.

Then I saw what I had
only heard about in tales of old.
Bold and blue,
slick and deceiving,
There it lay at my feet.
How easy it would be
to fall and drown in it
As so many have done before.
This, my friends, is the
sea of ignorance.

I am now lost
but I know I must cross.
Watch the sweat slide
down the skin of a young girl.
Follow it,
see where it goes.
This is something which knows
as much as we do.

It was on the third day
of my second year of travels
That I came into the third
continuum of being.
It was there I passed
a man and spoke to him.
"I have transversed the sea of
ignorance," I whispered,
"I am all knowing."
He grinned
and told me this:
"You know you want to,
not what is right.
"I'm centuries old and rotted,
you have seen no light.
"You wish to see a human being,
that I know you do,
"And so a being you are seeing,
just what you want to.
"You are alone in your life:
"What is wisdom to you
is nothing to others."
With that, he was gone.
I had been on my own trip
all along . . .

Hellfire!
Brimstone
burning

Old graves
turning
Horrid thoughts
churning.
An ignorant man
claims wisdom,
A wise man
is learning.

My thoughts now turned
since I have learned
That I am as ignorant
as all the others.
The man had been nothing
but a scant dream
As I drowned
in the sea.
Someone help me!
True wisdom can never be bought;
can never be learned;
can never be achieved.
In certainy I can say
that it does not exist.
It is a fool's chase
to follow this lace.

Oh, how my mind
torments me!
What have I missed that
I was meant to see?
It is uncrossable;
that ignorant sea.
I thought I could cross it,
how stupid of me!
I know nothing,
my stupidity crushing
My knowledge of my own
lack of wisdom.

And so, I turned and
went North.
It was from here I
went forth.

Brides maid
soothsayed
A young virgin
gets laid.
Brownstone
lost home
I guess I will
always roam . . .

TELL ME, IS IT LOVE?

Lyubov Mir

When you can't stop thinking about him
Can't stop dreaming about him
Can't stop wishing about him
Is it love?

When imagine is all you do
And wonder is all you do
And no other thoughts come through
Is it love?

When a thought in the back of your mind
Stays with you all the time
What other words can it define?
Is it love?

When all you can feel are his arms around you
And all you can hear is his voice beside you
And all that you want is to have him by you
Is it love?

When just seeing him gives you a jolt
Sharper than a lightning bolt
That catches your breath in your throat
Is it love?

When all it takes is a glance
To take away any chance
Of thoughts beside romance
Is it love?

When just a glimpse can stop your heart
And tear your reason apart
Yet give you hope for a start
Tell me, is it love?

MODERN FARMER

David Tieman

My digital rooster
Drowns in insomnia
Waiting patiently
For me to press hios buttons
And watching me
Confusingly read
Several foreign books
With red glowing eyes
As I go bald

TOMMOROW

Christian Bernal

And the gods shall weep
(Those false preminitions
in eartly eyes)
And the wind shall quicken
and rise

pick up
and rip through worlds

at the speed of light

and the hum
shall
return--

IN A LONELY LIBRARY

Steev Custer

In a lonely library, he cries for his heart. He has the room to himself, and it is so much like life that he knows comfort.

He divorced poetry, but has a line in his mind, a shirt sleeve to write on, and a pen in his back pocket.

Those who urged him never to write are away, and so he escaped to a quiet place where only librarians can watch and wait in anticipation for a line to be written in their sanctuary.

They believe. He believes, but is unsure.

Finally, it is done. But poetry is not his suitor. He has married fiction. And their children are so beautiful that the gods are jealous.

YOU THOUGHT I THOUGHT

Shelly Partilla

You thought I thought the
world of you
But little did you know
I kept you in a little square
box called "poetry file".
You thought you were my mentor
on the laws of love
But you were only a victim of
organization
And just another name on an index card.

LACE CURTAINS LOOK LOVELY

Jennifer Jay

Lace curtains look lovely
On one of these strange winter days
When the sky breaks blue
And the snow stinks
The bird-feeders become filled with water
And a breeze blows the curtains.

Cool breeze
Not with a soon-to-be-spring grin
But one with a teasing smile.
A prelude to freezing rain
Sleet
Flakes
Then sledding
Skiing
Snowmobiling
Romps with my dog in the snow.

TO THE ONE I HOLD MOST DEAR

Marie Cecily

To the one I hold most dear,
Above all else,
Closest to my heart.

To the one who's touch I need,
Can not do without,
And cry out for.

To the one who fills my mind,
Forever teasing, taunting,
Making me think.

To this one I surrender
My heart, my soul,
My love.

SHADOWS

Jonathan Wolff

Shadows
slowly growing
Take you
without knowing.
Pushing,
reaching, stretching
Try to
hold on, grasping.
Reality
changing, bending
Insanity
softly taking
You away.
day by day
night by night
plight by plight
nothing's right
dead end light
loss of sight
everything's tight
plight by light
dead end tight
everything's all right
Insane night.

A BEAUTIFUL LIQUID

David Tieman

A beautiful liquid
I became today
Dripping down through the floorboards
Into the haunted basement
Where my guitar bleeds
And the chandeliers respect
Those melted few
That lie in scattered puddles
Across the shiny glass floor
Of this lower heaven

BETHLEHEM

Linda Steger

I turn off the car engine halfway up the driveway. I don't want to wake up my husband. Or I don't want to come home. I'm not sure which. Regardless, my hand keeps the routine, pulling the silver handle to open the door.

The night is unprotected; creatures stir, villians pounce. A dog barks, barks, barks so I look up at the moon. The jester's face isn't full yet. Its pale illumination watches my figure below. Listening, I wait.

Nothing.

No one creeps around at night in this southern town without street lights. These country folks sit right in front of lights of TV sets, or perhaps as statistics say, beat little boys and girls. Or some other abuse listed in the Old Testament from which they read once a week. The fact is we"ll all be dead in a hundred years and another crop of society will sow its seeds. I look around in the deathly silence. Has this town waited to die?

I live just a pasture after the cow farm but before the yellow farm house on the curve. You can't miss us. The churh is within walking distance. Pastor Kainn has two daughters, Jessica and Maggie. They sing every Sunday. Unfortunately, their high voices escape between the transoms of stained glass. Sermons declare only holy, gentle people live in this town twenty miles off the interstate.

In two years nothing exciting has happened except little Ben Wesley hung his sister's cat at the Fourth of July picnic. Not much else except our flag pole got stolen and a rat drowned in our swimming pool. My husband insists this is a friendly country town where you can leave your doors unlocked at night while your mind drifts off with the clouds. But I know better.

My husband calls them coincidences. "You think people are people everywhere. That it all sucks. But it isn't so bad here. These people are closer to God's earth and God's wrath."

While his lips moved, I studied my penny ante, corporate thief of pencils, pens and note pads, turned small town history teacher. He continued to rationalize his way closer to redemption. I am not any better. My underwear is not pristine but I do not hang it out like other women cackling in back yards in a direct line of bellowing clothes lines full of white and crimson clothes. Mine goes in my dryer where it is privately blasted with hot air.

Last Sunday when I left on business, I asked if we could move back to the city. My huband told me the city was too corrupt for him. He grew up in a town like this. He had come back home he said. I agreed. He always reminded me of a little boy with his school books slung over his back. I cannot ask him to give up his childhood if it's his only treasure.

Before I enter the house, I rest in silence. No farm tractors roar, no pickup trucks charge under horse-power, no little farm boys with sling shots snap rocks at my garage windows. I face the moon. It's barren yet rich with reflections of light. What does its light whisper to me in the darkness?

I sit.

The cold cement step is like a block of ice under me. The dead dampness rises through my body and I shiver. I look around again. No one. Not even crickets yet this year, too early. Not even lovers in parked cars, too easy.

On other nights I've sat on the porch to get away from the caged feelings. Sometimes I've seen Jessica Kain letting her boyfriend in the window just past midnight. This summer they'll marry. She's sixteen, he is a mature twenty--yes!--he told me one day as he watched me carry in groceries. I nodded at him and locked the door behind me. The air conditioning, bought the second day we moved in, wet my face. I hear other folks stick their heads in freezers for seconds at a time.

The screen door hinges softly moan as I wake its rest. My husband alwaya leaves our doors unlocked. I tiptoe in with the moonlight following through the living room windows. I smile at its boldness radiating through the sheers.

The bedroom door is open wide. I'll chance a peek before making a cup of tea to sedate my nerves and news. Coming around the door frame, I note the open window welcoming mischevious thieves. The back of my husband facing me is like the dark side of the moon. In a moment he'll roll onto his back and resume snoring like a great white whale. My husband is the saint of the local high school. Him, they like. Gave him a best teacher's award last summer. I want to believe in his small town fantasy. I want to believe this is somewhere God chose to live on the seventh day. And truly, I want to believe the townspeople do good because it feels good.

He rolls on his back. I see someone lying next to him. At first I think it's the moonlight playing tricks. But brown hair swirls along the white pillow case. Looking harder I see it's Jessica who lets her boyfriend in through her window. This time, she has been let in.

I go to fix myself some tea, waiting for Jessica to leave. I imagine it will have to be pretty soon, my scheduled arrival was just before my husband heads for his first history class. Teaching can be so tiresome.

I sigh.

Before last week, I might have burned the house down after he tapped his horn for goodbye. As an alibi I'd mention Mrs. Dudley's cow nibbled our grass again. I'd insist I forgot about the lantern I lit, testing it for vacation to the Rockies. He'd believe the accident of the drought, the grass, the wild fire.

(con't)

I finish my tea. Wash my cup. Reverse my steps. Go back into the night and set the car in neutral to coast backwards. No one hears me. Their faith insists no one is out during the witching hour. I'll head for a ride in the city and be back when I'm expected. I wouldn't want to wake up this little town of Bethlehem.

Besides, sometimes people have to wake up on their own. It's like Preacher Kainn screaming until the jugular plumps to a red line along his neck during Sunday sermons. Only those who know understand human nature.

It's okay, I can wait.

I return under the strength of the sun. The front door is wide open. I suspect my husband is having his second cup of coffee at the kitchen table. How can I tell him I'm not the same person who left a week ago? Somehow, it's all right that he has reversed too. People do that. It's natural. But he won't understand, nor accept. He'll deny.

"Hi," I kiss his forehead, setting the donuts to his right. "You know Mrs. Campbell has to be watched every time I go into that store. She charged me $2.15 and gave me 49 cents in change."

"She's dyslexic," he repeats as he has the other ten times I've told him about being robbed.

"Maybe she's an expert with slight of hand."

"Hi," he smiles, ignoring my statement. He slowly pours me a cup. "I was hoping to take the day off but I had an exam planned."

"I understand," I want to ask if Jessica is going to get an "A"-- all that extra credit. Instead I ask, "Anything happen while I was in Detroit?"

"Nope," he slowly says scrubbing a spot off the table. I smile thinking he changed the sheets, too. How thoughtful.

Without warning, something inside of me raises a sword and wishes to slay this man. Inside, two persons wrestle, one uses words, one uses physical harm. I give in to the words.

"Until I was eighteen, I lived in Whitneyville. No more than 500 neighbors," I start. "We didn't publish a phone book. By the time I was in fourth grade I knew everyone. When I was twelve, I was molested."

"Jesus Christ!" he moans. "You never told me!"

"I didn't remember until this last week when I stopped to see Mom on my way home from the convention." I offer, the act of steadiness gluing me together. "I think it was living in this town for two years that dug up the dead."

"I'm sorry."

"So am I." I look at my hands trembling and no one reaching to stop them. "When I came home last night, I saw Jessica." The words fell flat on the table top. "I hate you for being so pious and so weak."

He didn't move. It was as if I took that sword in my mind, made it real, and sliced off his arms. Surprise. He expected to be knighted upon my return, instead . . .

"I'm leaving tonight," I say.

"We can . . ."

Can I tell him how I've been a hollow woman, spiritually dead and emotionally running by remote control? "This isn't Camelot. Life isn't a dream. You chose to deal with your awakening in one way, I'm choosing different. " I wash the same cup I rinsed earlier. I want to cry, fall to the floor and let him carry me to safety. But that's a fairy tale.

"You're in shock," he set his dirty cup in the sink. "We can talk about this when I get home. I'll try and cut my last class."

" I gave you my decision."

"I don't want you to go," he squeezes my hand and puts the dirty coffee pot in the sink. "Please."

"It's not always what happens to you but what you do with it," I say into his emotionless eyes. "Let me go."

His hand releases, my heart stops, At first, I thought he'd fight, regardless of his fantaasy. He wanted this town to be a Brigadoon or Bethlehem. When that cat swung from the tree, he cut it down. Removing the noose, he threw the victim off the edge into the river before little Sara Wesley came crying with the Fourth of July band silently behind her. No one had a chance to see the truth. They told her the cat must have jumped after a bird, hit a rock, and drown. The cat with the rope removed from its neck, bumped off the riverbank, taken again by the flow.

No one saw the rope hanging around the neck either. But the little girl still cries. That's what has frightened me since we moved into this small–minded town. Not that innocence can't be raped in the city, there they don't pretend so hard.

"If I thought . . . if I felt we could work this out, " I start but all the breath vanishes. I wait and finally begin again. "I had a -- little hope. You were looking for God's Green Acre and I was goin along with it. But that was before I saw you in the true light last night."

"I have to get to school," he mutters as he stiffly bends for the briefcase. "Last night was . . ."

"A child!"

"She came to me!"

"You bastard!"

"She's a bitch in heat -- you remember when we were sixteen. I remember you." He smears a cocky smile across his face.

My hand swings up and slaps him hard.

He pushes the screen door open, letting it slowly creak close. With the mesh between us, he softly says, "You may not believe this, but I never believed I was good enough for you. You're the lucky one."

(con't)

BETHLEHEM, continued

I step closer to the door as he walks down the stepping stones. I loved him and hate him. I reconsider setting fire to the house — but hasn't he his own hell?

When he doesn't come home after the final school bell rings, I pack as promised. And when the moon, full this time, awakes, I swing the last suitcase into the car.

VODKA BOWL

Christian Bernal

Cool mid-afternoon breeze circles in my room
Purple incense in the ashtray
burn
Stevies on the radio
I'm on the couch
There's a cheshire cat under my bed
and shadow indians on my ceiling
The sun is cold this morning

but bright.

SIN FOR LIFE

Mark Darwyn

Woe is me
whose sins are such
that none but I
can judge

The act of murder is
not my sin, nor that
of adultery or theft
or greed. The glory
of feelings that one
must emote while
commiting such acts
must excite the mind
and tickle the soul.

My spiritual fate is not
that which animates life,
nor will I suffer pangs
of hellfire hunger within
my belly after death.

Instead, my life source
soaks and seethes with the
icy cold umbra of nonfeeling
that is the essence of a
midnight sun shining with
non life and non sin

ROLLING STONE

Donica Rampa

Rolling Stone
And Marvel Comics--
Trademarks of the boy
Wearing a baseball cap
And sixties shades
Buying a brand new toy

Compassion and
a weight set
Trademarks of the man
Wearing sadness but
bringing laughter,
Struggling to make a stand.

SHRIVELED

Jonathan Wolff

Shriveled
brown leaves
Scattered
on the trees,
Clinging to the
lost dreams
of summer.

NO PERSONAL CHECKS

Donica Rampa

I dallied too long
when I was off
window shopping for love
Because by the time
I got up the courage
to make a purchase--
It was after business hours.

CLEAR WATERS

Rick Kroeza

From the pen
The poet scribbles
Thoughts of then
Passed off as mumbles
Take to heart
The words he's spoken
Search your soul
Find pieces broken

From lack of thought
And consideration
The feelings you fought
And actions wrong taken
Wandering blind
Through a sea of dreams
Hoping to find
What it all now means

THE EVIL INSIDE OF YOU

Jeff Hicks

The evil inside of you
always growing at a constant speed
devouring you inner self
your conciousness
your dreams
your life
from which you can never be healed
you can't escape it
it's inside of you
you can't run away
it's a part of you
you can't release it
because it's clamped down tight
This is the evil that all mortals fear . . .

This evil is love

TAKE A LOOK AT ME

Donica Rampa

Take a look at me
the dancing fool
I can make them laugh
with my words and antics
But my smile
is contrived for my purpose

ON WISCONSIN

Mark Darwyn

I once lived in the Wisconsin woods,
among Scotch and Jack and Cedar . . .

At night smokey flames throw flying sparks
upward to merge with sparkled dark sky light,
the wind from the lake blows sweet freshener
that could not be bought in a store,
the sandy highline rises and falls by the lake
with the rthymic quality of the waves,
while little cottages along the way
exist in piece with people beside them.

The Hideaway Inn beckons by the shore
and people eat, talk, and delight within,
nearby forest pond are stable and still
as deer and birds animate about,
while back in my woodlands I
sleep and dream of the peace around me,
and I wake to a dew-filled morn
wet with yearning for a new Wisconsin day.

A.P.I.B.L.

Steev Custer

She didn't tell me
before she left, she put a
flower of strength in her
beautiful hair.
Tonite she'll be with him,
and it could be forever.
but her words might
have held me safe for longer.
She didn't tell me.

She could've helped me.
but she left, with him,
and that flower that
giggled and grinned
the way out the front door.
Tonite will be forever,
and simple words could've
help me steadfast.
She wouldn't help me.

She could've killed me.
and the night wouldn't
wink in my favor.
She could've killed me,
but I did it for her.

SHE WRITES WITH HER PEN

Lyubov Mir

She writes with her pen
She writes on her paper
  But she writes with my words
  The words I put in her mind.
She thinks she's the only one to feel this way
  But there have been others
  And there will be others
Held fast under my spell.
She writes of love
And she talks of love
  But she doesn't know what it means.
She's heard what I can do
She wants to know if it's true
  No matter what it costs her.
She pours her heart out onto the paper
  But not her heart: mine.
She's just like all the others
  Who have searched for me
  Tried to capture me
  Tried to figure me out
They never will.
  Mortals cannot explain me.
  Dust can not comprehend me.
But she will try
And I will break her
  As I have before to so many others
As she plays my game
  Of love.

JAN 20TH

Justin Gale

i am not
ignorant
King lives long
down
with
damn
white

fools

DAYBREAK

Laura Offrink

Night drifts into day
Leaving mist in its way
As the light transforms the dark
Moonlight shadows softly part
And a force has made its way
As the night turns into day

Darkness is replaced
By a transfigured light
Soon night life will slowly end
As daybreak calls us back again
In a new and different way
As the night turns into day

Out jumps day from night
As dark runs in flight
And flees from the rising light
Now children can come and play
And poke fun in every way
As the night turns into day

As the sun rises
After hours of rest
It makes each day seem the best
Brightness towers over land
And one feels a warm light ray
As the night turns into day

LIVIN' ON THE EDGE

Donica Rampa

Livin' life in the fast lane,
Thinkin' that you got it all,
gonna' run into trouble,
Who's gonna catch you when you fall?

Daddy's got a lot of money,
he gives you your desire.
Runnin' around like a maniac--
You know your playin' with fire.

Livin' on the edge,
Pushing it too far,
better take it easy now,
you don't know where you are.

ONCE

Jennifer Jay

Once
Yet on and on again
I find myself close to the end.
But it turns to be the start
Rather, the continuation of this loathsome life.
God knows when
And if
I will be reborn
so that I may take on a more peaceful form.

Tranquility
So far So far
Truthfully thought, the blind cold grey
Of death
Is in my own hands.
Yet I watch out of hazel eyes
The hour glass sands
Stream to the past.
Stupified sometimes
by the pain.
It's not in my hands,
These are the wrists that bind the pulse.
Instinct
Cannot let it go so far.

Suffer.
A dam is what it is,
Holding back
Crowded close
Denied
Torrents lashing
My mind boils rage and abnormal passion.
Suffer.

THE STARLESS SKY

Lyubov Mir

It is frightening
To look up into the night and see
A starless sky.
No lights to guide you
No patterns to show you the way
The light obscured by clouds
Or maybe just not there.
The starless sky holds nothing
But darkness.
Nothing but an expanse of black
Waiting for the dawn to come
Waiting for the light.

WHEN ALL YOUR CARING HAS LEFT YOUR LIFE

Marie Cecily

When all your caring has left your life,
When your world is tumbling down,
When the strain is too great,
This is when I'll hold you up.
When the secrets can't be held,
When all your feelings must be shared,
When your soul needs healing,
This is when I'll open my heart for you.
when your world turns cold,
When the ice cuts through your soul,
When you need to be warmed,
This is when I'll protect you.
When you no longer feel my presence,
When you realize I'm not there,
When you find you need me most,
This is when I'll be waiting
For you to come to me.

LATE NIGHT JAZZ LISTENER

Mark Darwyn

Hey Jazz Man,
play me a song
to fill my soul
that will dump out
my Christmas coal.

Caress my ears
with funky horns,
purge myself anew
and make me feel reborn.

Mmm. That's good.
Phones cling to my head
as I dance in my bed.
No more can be said
than I am listening
to right now.

These room walls are all blue,
but the music here is all new,
and unlike life it rings true,
despite the fact that there are
only two minutes left to the disc.

When the music is over
I swaar I will repent.
I'll face my ife and
pay off the debts I've been lent.
But first I want to hear
the rest of this song.
And then another and another,
All through the night . . . .

OVER THE CHILLS

Christian Bernal

cold emotions

bathing in worms

a sliding orgasm

encased in porcelain

gold floors

glistening cobblestones

crystal horses

clear images by the floating firs of the walkway

bright feathers of a hawk

a prehistoric wingspan

eclipsing in the shimmering moon

shattered reflections take flight

in the deep

lush

night

reborn on the black sands of eternity

MY OWN PERFECT WORLD

Teresa Garcia

As the wind blows through my hair
It takes away all my worries
Leaving behind my pains and problems
Crying my tears as I cry
It takes me to a place filled with love
Green grass, flowers and trees
The sunshine bringing happiness
Birds singing melodies
The birds soaring through the blue sky
The shining sun showing peace
The formation of each individual leaf (con't)
The dandelions bringing back old childhood memories
This place is filled with love
Thoughts of only peace and happiness
Where everyone could be themselves
My own perfect world where I could be me . . .

I DROVE THROUGH YOUR HURT

Steev Custer

I drove through you hurt
last night. My headlight weren't
strong enough to cut depression's
thick cloud, but I could tell by
the thuds, pings, and screams that
I didn't want to see.
I cut the headlights and windshield
wipers off to avoid dissarray's
creation. It didn't help.
Driving last night made me realize
That i really understand
when you say "I'm depressed."
Because I've been there, and
I've been with you for so long.
Also, I love you.
And three, no matter what I
see ahead, I never want
to look behind in the
rear-view mirror of my mind.

BEAUTIFUL CHILD

Donica Rampa

Beautiful child
Watch him play
This world's grief
Shades not his day
In the sun field
he will
run
and learn
and laugh
oh beautiful child,
have fun.

NEARLY SPRING

Linda Steger

Friends
male and female
writers, lovers of the universe's soul
we walk
in a circle around campus

handing each other pieces of
the fabric we feel hold us together

Stalling departure,
we stop.

Sitting in the dark
under a tree
on a picnic bench

you and I
tell stories

of our lives
so different
and so related

And as the cold breath
of midnight
creeps up your sleeves
and under my skirt

We start the walk
to complete the circle

But before we cross
the parking lot to our cars

I pause reaching for
three short, delicate branches
of flowers from a tree

And, as you prepare to leave me,
I ask, "Do you want one of my flowers?"

"Yes, I'll put it on my desk in the morning."

COME!

Jonathan Wolff

Come!
Partake in the consummation
of this
Fine,
Ancient
liquid.
Slowly,
Sip by sip,
It allows you to
become your true self.
The demons that
reign within
Can be released.

The oldest of
intoxicants!
Courage,
Self-confidence,
Stupidity.
All are contained
within.
How can such a pleasure
be such a sin?
It will take you on
a journey
To the depths of
your soul.
Read the 'lore
of old . . .
it will tell you.
However, be careful.
You are never told
where death awaits.
All it takes
is one loss of control
For one to sell
one's soul.
I'll never tell.
You,I will not
forsake.